TMA family

Toledo Museum of Art

Revelation: Major Paintings by Julez Olitski

About the Artist

Jules Olitski using mitted hands in his studio, Bear Island, New Hampshire. Photo by Kristina Olitski, care of the Olitski family.

During his long career as a painter, Jules Olitski experimented with color, paint, and many different painting tools to create **abstract** paintings. An **abstract** painting has no recognizable subject – that is, it doesn't look like a person, animal, or building. Instead, its subject might be elements of art, such as **shape**, **color**, and **texture**.

As you walk through this exhibition, try to guess how Olitski created each painting. Also, look closely at the shapes, colors, and textures. Be sure to go to the interactive area in this exhibition, where you can learn more about how artists create abstract art.

Fun with Paint

Olitiski liked to experiment with paint. Sometimes he liked to use very thick paint; sometimes he sprayed the paint onto the canvas; sometimes he even painted with a blindfold on. Imagine – painting without seeing! Olitski loved to play with paint. Do you?

Cover: *Prince Patutszky Pleasures* (detail). Magna acrylic on canvas, 1962. Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Bebe and Crosby Kemper Collection, Gift of the R.C. Kemper Charitable Trust, 2009.21.

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With Love and Disregard: Splendor. Acrylic on canvas, 2002. Collection of Audrey and David Mirvish, Toronto

Shape, Color, & Texture

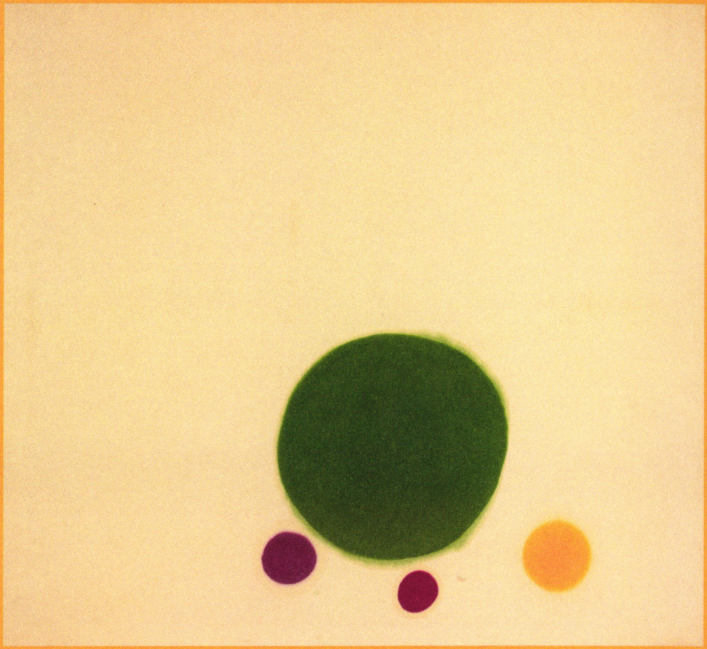
Later in his life, Olitski painted in many different ways. He sprayed, swirled, dripped, scraped, and dabbed the paint onto the canvas. Now that you have thought about **shape**, **color**, and **texture** in different paintings by Olitski, look at *With Love and Disregard: Splendor*.

Name or describe all of the different colors, shapes, and textures that Olitski has included.

- What emotion does the painting look like to you? Happy? Excited? Scared? Angry?
- What shape did Olitski use the most in this painting?
- How would this painting feel if you could touch it?

Shape

Look for the painting *Monkey Woman*. To create the artwork, Olitski used a chemical on the canvas so that the paint would soak into the canvas and "stain" it. He then used paint to create his **shapes** on the canvas.

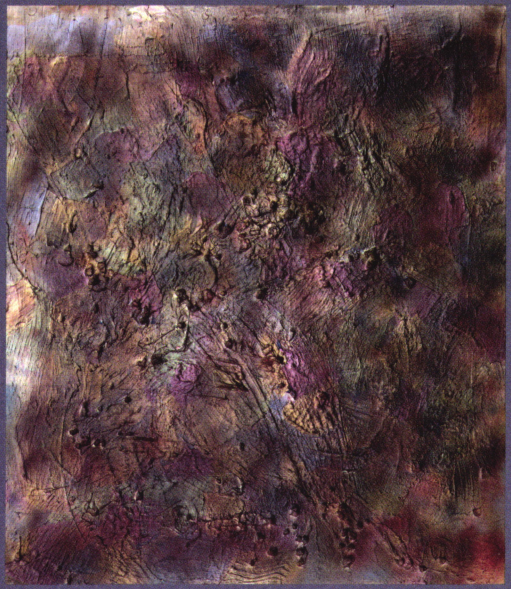


Monkey Woman. Acrylic on canvas, 1964. Private Collection

- Why do you think he called it *Monkey Woman*? What title would you give the painting?
- What would it look like if they were squares instead of circles?

In this guide or in the interactive area in this exhibition, draw your own abstract picture using different circles of different sizes and colors.

Texture



Of Darius. Acrylic on canvas, 1988. Private Collection

Olitski began to add ingredients to his paint to make it extra thick. By doing this, he created a lot of different textures. A **texture** is the way something feels when you touch it. Look for the painting *Of Darius*.

The texture sample below will give you an idea of how this painting might feel. Rub your hand over it. What word would you choose to describe how it feels?

When you stop by the interactive area in this exhibition, you will be able to feel the many different textures that artists create when using paint.

To Do at the Museum

Use this space to create your own abstract drawing using shape.

Color

Patutsky in Paradise. Acrylic on canvas, 1966. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Purchase, 1982

Olitski experimented with **color** by using a kind of high-powered spray gun to paint instead of a paint brush. That's how he made *Patutsky in Paradise*.

- How can you tell that he used a spray gun instead of a paint brush?
- How many colors do you see in this painting?
- Paradise is a happy place. How does Olitski express happiness in this painting?

Be sure to stop by the interactive area in this exhibition. There you can create a 'happy' painting on a computer. What colors will you use?

To Do at Home

Use this space to create your own abstract drawing using shape, color, and texture.